

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re the Application of:

Youji KOHDA et al.

Serial No. 09/766,646

Group Art Unit: 3622

Confirmation No. 4296

Filed: January 23, 2001

Examiner: Arthur D. Duran

For: ONLINE SALES PROMOTION METHOD AND DEVICE

APPLICANT APPEAL BRIEF UNDER 37 C.F.R. §41.37

Mail Stop Appeal Brief-Patents
Commissioner for Patents
PO Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

In a Notice of Appeal filed on April 7, 2008, the Applicants appealed from the Examiner's Final Office Action mailed November 6, 2007, finally rejecting claims 1-12 and 14-26. Submitted herewith is an Applicant Appeal Brief under 37 C.F.R. §41.37, and the requisite fees set forth in 37 C.F.R. §41.20(b)(2). A petition for a two-month extension of time and the required fees are concurrently filed herewith, thereby extending the period for filing this brief to August 7, 2008.

If any further fees are required in connection with this filing, please charge our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

I. REAL PARTY IN INTEREST

The real party in interest is Fujitsu Limited, Kawasaki, Japan, the assignee of the present above-identified pending US patent application.

II. RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

Appellants, Appellants' legal representative, and the assignee do not know of any prior or pending appeals, interferences or judicial proceedings, which may be related to, directly affect or be directly affected by, or have a bearing on, the Board's decision in this appeal.

III. STATUS OF CLAIMS

Claims 1-12 and 14-26 are rejected.

Claims 1-12 and 14-26 are being appealed.

IV. STATUS OF AMENDMENTS

The Appellants filed an Amendment on October 12, 2007. The Examiner entered the Amendment of October 12, 2007 and issued the final Office Action of November 6, 2007.

V. SUMMARY OF CLAIMED SUBJECT MATTER

The claims being appealed are 1-12 and 14-26. The appealed independent claims are 1, 11, 12, 14 and 21-23.

The present invention relates to an online sales promotion method and/or apparatus used in a system to purchase a product over a network. See, for example, the present Application page 18, line 19 through page 19, line 10, and FIG. 1 (illustrating a functional block diagram of an online sales promotion system for purchasing products over a network represented by reference characters 1-5).

In the system illustrated in FIG. 1, cart identification information may be associated with a first user and stored in a cart DB 32. See, for example, the present Application page 21, lines 6-13, FIG. 2, reference character 32, and FIG. 4A (showing Cart ID's, represented in this figure as a 4-digit number, correlated with User ID's, represented in this figure as the user's email address).

The first user is able to designate information of a third party product provider which the first user permits to view the cart identification information and to view product information which the first user associates with the cart identification information, providing a benefit in that the third party product provider is able to see products that may be ordered from another provider by the user. The designation information is stored in a permission list 136. The third party product provider also provides a product related to the product information viewed by the third party based upon the permission, as well as additional information related to the product information viewed by the third party based upon the permission. The third party product provider does not have permission to view the cart identification and product information before the designation information from the first user. See, for example, the present Application page 23, lines 10-18, page 24, lines 4-14, and FIG. 3, reference character 136.

The designation information is associated and stored with the cart identification information in the permission list 136. See, for example, the present Application page 23, lines 10-18, and FIG. 3, reference character 136.

The apparatus or system is able to receive and store, in a candidate product list 137, product information on a product from the first user when the first user, for example, selects items to be placed in a cart, or on a wishlist, etc. See, for example, the present Application page 29, line 23 through page 30, line 14, FIG. 3, reference character 137, and FIG. 14, reference character S4.

The third party product provider associated with the cart identification information is notified, through a communications interface 312, of the cart identification information and product information in accordance with the receipt of the designation information of the third party product provider or a receipt of the product information itself. See, for example, the present Application page 29, line 23 through page 30, line 14, and page 31, line 19 through page 32, line 14, FIG. 3, reference character 312, and FIG. 14, reference characters S5 and S10-S12.

Additional information regarding the product identified by the product information, and the cart identification information, is received from the third party product provider and stored in an external information list 139. See, for example, the present Application page 30, line 15 through page 31, line 8, FIG. 3, reference character 139, and FIG. 14, reference characters S7.

An output processing unit 313 determines whether the received additional information is from the third party product provider which has permission from the first user to view the cart identification information and to view the product information associated with the cart identification information. See, for example, the present Application page 31, lines 5-19, FIG. 3, reference character 313, and FIG. 14, reference character S8.

The received additional information from the third party product provider is associated, by the output processing unit 313, with the cart identification information according to the determination result. See, for example, the present Application page 31, lines 5-16, FIG. 3, reference character 313, and FIG. 14, reference characters S7, S8, and S9.

The output processing 313 notifies the first user of the received product information and additional information from the third party product provider. See, for example, the present Application page 31, lines 14-16, and FIG. 14, reference character S9.

Therefore, the first user is able to designate exactly which third party product providers are able to see the first user's cart information regarding a product from a separate provider, and if designated then those third party product providers may view the cart information and provide additional information regarding the product as well as other related product information.

VI. GROUNDS OF REJECTION TO BE REVIEWED ON APPEAL

Claims 1-12 and 14-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hunt (U.S. Patent No. 6,223,215) in view of Hoyle (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2005/0005242) in view of Allibhoy (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0172343) in view of Notz (U.S. Patent No. 7,016,864).

At issue is whether Hunt, Hoyle, Allibhoy, and Notz disclose, expressly or implicitly, to one skilled in the art to achieve, the claims 1-12 and 14-26.

A first sub-issue is whether the Examiner has established a prima facie case of obviousness based upon Hunt, Hoyle, Allibhoy, and Notz (MPEP §2141 and 2142).

A second sub-issue is whether the Examiner has provided proper motivation for a combination of Hunt, Hoyle, Allibhoy, and Notz under MPEP §2143 and 2144.

VII. ARGUMENTS

In the final Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-12 and 14-26 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hunt in view of Hoyle in view of Allibhoy in view of Notz.

Claim 1 of the present application recites "receiving, from the first user, designation information of a third party product provider which the first user permits to view the cart identification information and to view product information which the first user associates with the cart identification information, and which provides a product related to the viewed product information as well as additional information related to the viewed product information, said third party product provider not having permission to view the cart identification and product information before receipt of the designation information." A benefit of such a feature is that the user is able to determine beforehand which third party product providers, which may have related information or products to the product chosen by the user, are able to provide any additional information such as advertisement to the user, rather than being bombarded by a host of advertisers which may have no connection whatsoever to the product chosen by the user.

Hunt describes a method of electronic commerce directed to tracking a user's purchases. More specifically, Hunt teaches software executed on a server computer for selling products to a consumer. However, in Hunt, information passes only between the user and the seller, which would be the provider of the product chosen by the user, and nowhere does Hunt disclose or suggest passing any type of information to a third party product provider which can then provide additional information regarding the first seller's product chosen by the user.

Hoyle also teaches methods of electronic commerce. Specifically, Hunt describes methods involving an electronic shopping cart and teaches storing in the cart a URL of a Web site having product information. Although Hoyle discloses storing a URL in a shopping cart, this feature merely allows a user to access information on a third party's Web site. This feature does not allow a third party product provider to access information associated with another provider's product in the user's cart.

It was shown by the Applicants in the Amendment filed on August 22, 2006, that neither Hunt nor Hoyle, either alone or in combination, discloses or suggests at least the above-recited features of claim 1. This was acknowledged by the Examiner in item 2 on page 2 Office Action mailed October 19, 2006. Further, in the current action, the Examiner acknowledged that Hunt does not disclose a vendor/seller seeing the user's cart and making further recommendations (cross-selling).

The current Office Action relies on two more references to cure the acknowledged deficiencies of Hunt and Hoyle regarding the subject features of claim 1. The Examiner relied

upon Allibhoy, and, to a lesser extent, Notz, as evidence to one skilled in the art to combine the same with Hunt and Hoyle, and then further modify Hunt and Hoyle to achieve this feature.

However, the Applicants have provided more than necessary evidence that neither Allibhoy nor Notz cures the deficiencies of Hunt and Hoyle regarding the recited features of claim 1. In response, the Examiner has provided information which does not seem to be related to the recited features which are the subject of the Applicants' arguments. The Applicants respectfully address the Examiner's remarks below.

Allibhoy

Allibhoy discloses a network system in which a network controller is able to monitor and control enhanced viewer content and potential transactions between a user and a product provider which arise from the enhanced viewer content (Paragraphs [0053]-[0054]).

The ATV controller of Allibhoy determines whether the content provider related to the enhanced viewer content is an authorized provider before allowing any interaction between the user and the content provider (Paragraphs [0067]-[0068]). The ATV controller may perform this determination before allowing the enhanced content to reach the user, or it may allow the enhanced content to pass and then perform the determination upon an attempt by the user to contact the content provider (Paragraph [0069]). If the content provider is authorized, then the user may order a product or service from the provider. The product or service is placed in a "shopping cart" when the user initiates the purchase (Paragraph [0074]). If the user wishes to get additional information from the content provider, the ATV controller facilitates this request (Paragraph [0075]). "This information may include the stock keeping unit or SKU, additional product descriptions and specifications, pictures, videos, stock information, tax and delivery information, etc." (Paragraph [0075]).

The Examiner Has Not Established A Prima Facie Case of Obviousness

The Applicants respectfully submit that it is apparent that there is no access to the shopping cart given to the product provider in Allibhoy, nor can the product provider view the shopping cart information. Further, as only this subject product provider supplies the product at question in Allibhoy, i.e., the product about which the user may request more information, then it is readily apparent that the product provider could not be considered a third party product provider. In other words, the user may order the product from the product provider, and may request additional information, such as shipping information, from that same provider, but there

is no third party product provider as recited in claim 1 of the present application. The language of the claim expressly recites product information which the first user associates with the cart, and also a third party product provider which the user permits to see the product information. For instance, once a product is placed in the cart, which is an example of the product information which the first user associates with the cart identification information recited in claim 1, a third-party product provider would indeed necessarily have to be other than the provider of the product placed in the cart. Therefore, the Applicants respectfully submit that the claim language expressly differentiates the third party product provider as not being the provider of the product that is the subject of the product information which may be viewed by the third party product provider. Thus, the features of Alibhoy and Notz relied on by the Examiner are improper in many ways. The Applicants will now address the Examiner's Response to Arguments regarding Alibhoy on a point by point basis.

- The Examiner alleged that Alibhoy discloses allowing third party product providers to send content to the user only after receiving permission from the user, citing claim 16 ("permitting the network transaction to proceed if the content provider abides by said third party parameters"). The Examiner then alleged that claim 19 adds third party parameters including a user profile associated with said receiver to determine whether the network transaction may proceed.

The Applicants respectfully submit that it is apparent that the feature of Alibhoy identified by the Examiner merely discloses allowing a user to contact a product provider to purchase a product or service, upon the user responding to enhanced viewer content, if the product provider has been authorized by the ATV controller (Paragraph [0067]). At this point in the potential transaction, it is readily apparent that there is no shopping cart content from that provider. In other words, there is no product, and therefore no product information, yet in the shopping cart to be viewed. Further, there is no permission whatsoever being granted by the user. Quite to the contrary, the user is requesting to interact to the product provider, and the ATV controller then determines whether or not to allow the interaction to occur depending on whether the product provider has been authorized by the Network Operator. Thus, not only is there no product in the cart, and no third-party product provider (only the direct product provider that is performing the authorized advertising), there is no permission to communicate at all granted from the user. The permission is simply asked for.

Regarding the user profile, Paragraph [0070] clearly describes that the user profile typically includes such information as the geographic location of the user to determine the appropriate information for the ATV controller. This does not disclose, nor even contemplate, permitting a third party product provider access to cart information.

However, the Applicants do note that Paragraphs [0159]-[0162] discuss allowing a user to manually set trigger filter information to allow information for particular subjects to come through on the channels being watched by the user. However, this merely allows triggers on topics of interest to be seen by the user, and is quite clearly not set for any specific product provider at all, much less access to a third party product provider to view cart information. In fact, this is not germane to any cart information at all.

- The Examiner then alleged Paragraph [0159] discloses allowing the third party product providers to send content to the user only after receiving permission from the user.

As previously discussed, Paragraph [0159] discloses a user setting a trigger information filter according to topics of interest, or to monitor certain channels (e.g., a local channel, a headline news service, a sports broadcast service, etc. as disclosed in Paragraph [0162]). The "triggers" which are allowed are prompts in the enhanced viewer content which allow the user to "click" on for product or service information (Paragraph [0058]). There is no contemplation whatsoever of giving permission to any specific product provider to send information through these triggers. Further, even if there were permission to a specific product provider, then this would still fail, in many ways, to disclose the discussed features of claim 1. First, this trigger information would simply be an advertisement, and not related to any cart information whatsoever, much less a product in the cart. Also, because there is no cart information being accessed, the product provider providing the product or service would not be a third-party product provider. Therefore, the Applicants respectfully submit that this disclosure of Allibhoy has no bearing on the recited features of claim 1.

- The Examiner cited Paragraph [0137] of Allibhoy, alleging that the trigger can be an indicator for a specific Content Provider.

The Applicants respectfully submit that it is apparent that the trigger can be an indicator for a specific product provider. However, the trigger information filter is set by information related to the triggers, not any specific trigger. In other words, the user does not set the actual triggers that are allowed in the filter, but sets the filter so that triggers associated with the information will be passed through. If the user knew the precise triggers desired, the user would simply go directly to the product provider associated with the trigger. Why would the user wait for the trigger to arrive through enhanced television content?

Regardless, this trigger is still simply an advertisement for a product, and is not related to any product information in a cart. Nor is it from a third-party product provider. It is simply from a direct product provider.

- The Examiner alleged, "Hence, Allibhoy discloses permitting the network transaction to proceed if the content provider abides by said third party parameters; wherein said third party parameters include a user profile associated with said receiver. And, Allibhoy discloses that the user can control their profile directly and with a wide range of parameters. And, Allibhoy discloses that one of the parameters can be a particular Content Provider."

As already discussed, naming a content provider as acceptable for receiving blind advertisements from is in no way related to giving a third-party product provider access to view cart information. Further, the network transaction cited by the Examiner comes well after the delivery of any such trigger information. Therefore, the Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner is improperly characterizing the two actions as the same thing. Regardless, as discussed at length in this Response, none of this trigger information is tantamount to giving permission to a third-party product provider to view product information associated with the cart.

- The Examiner alleged that Allibhoy discloses a shopping cart where further information from third parties can be obtained and presented to the user, and noted that the user can change their profile and that authorizations from the user may be necessary.

The Applicants respectfully submit that this allegation by the Examiner is not valid. Any further information from the product provider is simply obtained by the ATV controller from the product provider itself (Paragraphs [0074]-[0075]). Since this product provider provided the actual product of which the user has initiated the purchase of, and is therefore the direct product provider, then it is quite obviously not a third-party product provider. Further, the product provider is not given access to view the cart information at all, the ATV controller simply queries the product provider for the information. Therefore, it would be quite apparent to one skilled in the art that there has been no permission granted to a third party product provider by a first user to view cart identification information and product information associated with the cart identification information.

Also, as previously discussed, changing the user profile in Allibhoy is not related whatsoever to giving permission to any specific product provider to view cart identification information. Rather, it may, at best, allow advertisements to be sent along with other television programming.

- The Examiner cited Paragraph [0094], alleging that the user in Allibhoy can control the user profile and the user profile can be a filter that requires authorizations for certain transactions.

Again, the Examiner is apparently trying to equate the user trigger information filter with giving permission to a product provider to view information. The Applicants have shown in great detail that this simply allows product providers associated with the filter information to plant advertisement triggers in enhanced television content. Thus, there is no product information to be viewed by any product provider, much less a third party product provider.

In other words, a user may set the trigger information filter to allow triggers to pass through which are related to information. Even in the event that a user has identified a specific content provider for which related triggers are able to pass, this simply allows that product provider to send advertisement triggers through enhanced viewer content. For example, if a viewer is interested in information regarding Suzuki motorcycles, the viewer may identify Suzuki in the filter information as being acceptable. This merely allows any advertisement triggers which may come along from Suzuki to be passed on through with the content being viewed by the user. The user, upon seeing the trigger, can then "click" on the trigger to get information about the product being advertised. However, there has been no permission granted by the user for Suzuki to view any product information associated with a cart by the user. And, even if

the user purchases the advertised product from Suzuki, Suzuki would be the direct product provider, not a third party product provider. Therefore, as shown through much evidence offered above, Allibhoy fails on several levels to disclose, suggest, or even contemplate the discussed features recited in claim 1 of the present application.

The remainder of the Examiner's responses also seem to discuss these triggers, which have been shown by the Applicants to be completely unrelated to any type of access to product information associated with cart information.

In the Office Action issued on November 6, 2007, the Examiner alleged that Allibhoy discloses that the third party can be related to the products directly or indirectly, and went on to make several allegations regarding cross-selling and similar themes. The Applicants respectfully submit that such allegations are in now way germane to the fact that Allibhoy does not disclose, suggest, nor even contemplate a user giving permission to a third party product provider to view product information associated with a user's cart.

Also, in the same action, the Examiner alleged that the "Applicants' Specification states that the third party can be the party who manufactures or provides the products in the user's cart ([21], [27])." The Applicants note with interest that the Examiner offered this allegation immediately after the boilerplate paragraph regarding not reading limitations from the specification into the claims. However, of greater interest is that the Examiner's allegations must be considered invalid by not only anyone skilled in the art, but also the layperson. To wit, the paragraphs cited by the Examiner state the following:

[0021] receiving product information on the product and designation information on a third party being able to supply additional information about the product from a first user;

[0027] According to this method, a user designates and shows to a third party the contents of his online shopping cart, and can have that third party supply the cart with additional information such as proposals and advertisements relating to the products in the cart. This allows the user to receive useful information, thereby allowing him to purchase good products at a more appropriate price. This also gives the third party a chance to advertise a product that the user has a high possibility of purchasing.

The Applicants respectfully submit that it is clear from even the most liberal interpretation of these paragraphs that the third party is not the supplier of the product at issue. There would be absolutely no reason to refer to a party supplying the product in the online shopping cart as a "third party". A third party product provider would be outside the exchange of the user ordering a product from the supplying provider.

Regarding Notz, the Examiner stated that Notz discloses a merchant/seller being able to see the cart and make an upsell recommendation. The Examiner alleged that a series of "business rules" can control how or who accesses the shopping cart, which is in direct contrast to a user giving permission beforehand to a third party product provider to view cart information. However, the Applicants again point out that Notz does not cure the deficiencies of the other cited references regarding "said third party product provider not having permission to view the cart identification and product information before receipt of the designation information."

The Examiner Has Not Provided Proper Motivation For Combination Or Modification

The Examiner also briefly discussed Hoyle disclosing a user being able to indicate a guest user who is able to see the account, and apparently went on to surmise that this could mean that a user could appoint all of the members of a corporation to be a guest user. The Examiner is apparently attempting to allege that a user can authorize a corporation to be a guest user, and that corporation could be a third party product provider viewing the user's cart. The Applicants respectfully submit that example by the Examiner, which is in no way supported in the disclosure of Hoyle, is improper and has no bearing on the recited features of claim 1. No one skilled in the art would make the jump in logic of a user allowing a corporation to log in and see the user's cart identification information, if this is indeed what the Examiner is attempting to convey. One could envision allowing a friend to see cart information, such as a wish list, so as to be able to choose gifts and such from the information. But allowing members of a corporation to view such information and act in the guise of a third party product provider stretches the bounds of a reasonable imagination. Therefore, the Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner's allegation regarding Hoyle is moot regarding the deficiencies of Allibhoy in reference to claim 1 of the present application. Thus, such a characterization of Hoyle does not expressly or implicitly disclose to one skilled in the art to modify Allibhoy, or any of the other references, in any such manner.

Further, the Applicants respectfully submit that there is no motivation to combine Allibhoy with the other cited references, as Allibhoy merely discloses controlling advertisement in enhanced television programming, which is in no way related to advertising targeted to products in a cart.

Also, the Applicants respectfully submit that while the Examiner's discussion of "triggers" in Allibhoy do not cure the many deficiencies regarding claim 1, there would be no motivation to modify the triggers to allow a user to directly name certain product providers as being allowed to

send information, there being no cart information for that provider to see, when a user could simply go straight to the provider instead of waiting for the information.

The Applicants respectfully submit that even under the apparently relaxed standards of the KSR decision, there would be no motivation for one skilled in the art to combine the enhanced broadcast content of Allibhoy with the computer shopping methods described in the remaining references. Further, even if there were such motivation to combine, there is still such a deficiency regarding the features of claim 1 that the resulting product would serve no reasonable similar purpose. Also, as discussed above, there is also no motivation to modify the references, as even the modifications suggested by the Examiner do not result in the features recited in claim 1.

A prima facie case of obviousness based upon Hun, Hoyle, Allibhoy, and Notz has not been established, because there is no evidence expressly or implicitly to one skilled in the art to combine or even modify the references to provide the features recited in the claims. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 patentably distinguishes over the cited references.

Claims 2-10 depend from claim 1 and include all of the features of that claim plus additional features which are not disclosed or suggested by the cited references. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claims 2-10 also patentably distinguish over the cited references.

Independent claims 11-12, 14, and 21-23 recite similar features to those discussed above, and which are not disclosed or suggested by the cited references. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claims 11-12, 14, and 21-23 also patentably distinguish over the cited references.

Claims 15-20 depend from claim 14, and claims 24-26 depend from claim 23. These dependent claims include all of the features of their respective independent claim plus additional features which are not disclosed or suggested by the cited references. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claims 15-20 and 24-26 also patentably distinguish over the cited references.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Appellants respectfully submit that pending appealed claims 1-12 and 14-26 patentably distinguish over the relied upon prior art. Reversal of the Examiner's rejections is respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is authorized to charge any Appeal Brief Fee or Petition for Extension of Time fee for underpayment, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,
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VIII. CLAIMS APPENDIX

1. (previously presented) An online sales promotion method used in a system to purchase a product over a network, said method comprising:
 - associating cart identification information with a first user;
 - receiving, from the first user, designation information of a third party product provider which the first user permits to view the cart identification information and to view product information which the first user associates with the cart identification information, and which provides a product related to the viewed product information as well as additional information related to the viewed product information, said third party product provider not having permission to view the cart identification and product information before receipt of the designation information;
 - associating and storing the designation information with the cart identification information;
 - receiving product information on said product from the first user;
 - associating said product information with the cart identification information;
 - notifying said third party product provider associated with said cart identification information of said cart identification information and product information in accordance with a receipt of designation information of said third party product provider or a receipt of said product information;
 - receiving additional information regarding the product identified by said product information, and the cart identification information, from said third party product provider;
 - determining whether the received additional information is from the third party product provider which the first user permits to view the cart identification information and to view the product information associated with the cart identification information;
 - associating said received additional information with said cart identification information according to the determination result; and
 - notifying said first user of said received product information and additional information.

2. (original) An online sales promotion method in accordance with claim 1, further comprising:

- associating settlement information of said user needed for a purchase of said product over said network with said cart identification information;
 - receiving an instruction for said purchase of said product from said first user; and
 - selling said product to said first user, using said settlement information.

3. (original) An online sales promotion method in accordance with claim 2, further comprising:

storing whether or not said product is purchased; and

notifying said first user that said product is purchased or not purchased yet.

4. (previously presented) An online sales promotion method in accordance with claim 2, further comprising:

receiving an instruction for assignment and second user information on a second user from said first user; and

associating said second user with said cart identification information.

5. (original) An online sales promotion method in accordance with claim 2, further comprising:

determining whether or not an incentive condition has been fulfilled based on said product information, designation information and settlement information, said incentive condition predetermined for awarding said first user for said purchase of said product; and

awarding said first user based on said determining.

6. (previously presented) An online sales promotion method in accordance with claim 1, further comprising:

notifying said product provider of said additional information.

7. (previously presented) An online sales promotion method in accordance with claim 1, further comprising:

notifying said product provider of competitor information on other product providers.

8. (previously presented) An online sales promotion method in accordance with claim 1, further comprising:

monitoring for an occurrence of a predetermined event based on said product information and designation information; and

notifying said product provider of said occurrence when said predetermined event occurs.

9. (previously presented) An online sales promotion method in accordance with claim 1, further comprising:

determining whether or not said product provider has fulfilled a fee charging condition based on said product information and designation information,

computing fee charging information for charging fees to said product provider which has fulfilled said fee charging condition; and

storing said fee charging information for invoicing said product provider.

10. (previously presented) An online sales promotion method in accordance with claim 1, further comprising:

computing a relationship between product and product price based on said product information; and

supplying said relationship to said first user and/or said product provider.

11. (previously presented) An online sales promotion apparatus used in a system to purchase a product over a network, said apparatus comprising:

means for associating cart identification information with a first user;

means for receiving, from the first user, designation information of a third party product provider which the first user permits to view the cart identification information and to view product information which the first user associates with the cart identification information, and which provides a product related to the viewed product information as well as additional information related to the viewed product information, said third party product provider not having permission to view the cart identification and product information before receipt of the designation information;

means for associating and storing the designation information with the cart identification information;

means for receiving product information on said product from the first user;

means for associating said product information with the cart identification information;

means for notifying said third party product provider associated with said cart identification information of said cart identification information and product information in accordance with a receipt of designation information of said third party product provider or a receipt of said product information;

means for receiving additional information regarding the product identified by said product information, and the cart identification information, from said third party product provider;

means for determining whether the received additional information is from the third party product provider which the first user permits to view the cart identification information and to view the product information associated with the cart identification information;

means for associating said received additional information with said cart identification information according to the determination result; and

means for notifying said first user of said received product information and additional information.

12. (previously presented) A computer-readable recording medium whereon is recorded an online sales promotion program, for use in a system to purchase a product over a network, said program executes:

associating cart identification information with a first user;

receiving, from the first user, designation information of a third party product provider which the first user permits to view the cart identification information and to view product information which the first user associates with the cart identification information, and which provides a product related to the viewed product information as well as additional information related to the viewed product information, said third party product provider not having permission to view the cart identification and product information before receipt of the designation information;

associating and storing the designation information with the cart identification information;

receiving product information on said product from the first user;

associating said product information with the cart identification information;

notifying said third party product provider associated with said cart identification information of said cart identification information and product information in accordance with a receipt of designation information of said third party product provider or a receipt of said product information;

receiving additional information regarding the product identified by said product information, and the cart identification information, from said third party product provider;

determining whether the received additional information is from the third party product provider which the first user permits to view the cart identification information and to view the product information associated with the cart identification information;

associating said received additional information with said cart identification information according to the determination result; and

notifying said first user of said received product information and additional information.

13. (cancelled)

14. (previously presented) An online sales promotion method, comprising:
receiving, via a network, designation information designating one or more third party information-providing terminals which the first user permits to access a cart identifier associated with the first user, to access product information which the first user associates with the cart identifier, and to provide additional product information related to the accessed product information, from a first user terminal, said third party information-providing terminals not having permission to view the cart identifier and product information before receipt of said designation information;

storing in a first storage, in association with the cart identifier, the product information and the designation information;

sending the cart identifier and the product information associated therewith to the one or more designated third party information-providing terminals in accordance with a receipt of designation information of the one or more third party information-providing terminals or receipt of the product information;

receiving additional information regarding the product information, and the cart identifier, from any one of the designated third party information-providing terminals;

determining whether the received additional information is from the third party information-providing terminal which the first user permits to access the cart identifier and to access the product information associated with the cart identifier;

storing the received additional information in association with the cart identifier in a second storage according to the determination result; and

sending to the first user terminal the product information and the additional information.

15. (previously presented) An online sales promotion method according to claim 14, further comprising:

associating and storing settlement information of the first user needed for a purchase of the product over the network with the cart identifier; and

receiving a designation instruction and purchase of the product from the first user terminal.

16 (previously presented) An online sales promotion method according to claim 15, further comprising:

receiving from the first user terminal an assignment instruction of the cart identifier to a second user terminal; and

rewriting the user terminal associated with the cart identifier from the first user terminal to the second user terminal.

17. (previously presented) An online sales promotion method in accordance with claim 15, further comprising:

storing an incentive condition for sending award information relating to a purchase of a product to the user terminals;

determining whether the incentive condition is met based on information associated with the cart identifier; and

sending the award information to the first user terminal in accordance with the determination result.

18. (previously presented) An online sales promotion method in accordance with claim 14, further comprising:

monitoring an occurrence of a predetermined event based on information associated with the cart identifier; and

notifying the designated information-providing terminal of the occurrence of predetermined event.

19. (previously presented) An online sales promotion method in accordance with claim 14, further comprising:

storing a charging condition for charging administrators of the information-providing terminals in the second storage; and

monitoring for an occurrence of an information-providing terminal that matches the charging condition based on information associated with the cart identifier, and upon a match, computing charging information for charging fee to an administrator of that information-providing terminal.

20. (previously presented) An online sales promotion method in accordance with claim 14, further comprising:

receiving a designation of one or more information-providing terminals and the product from one or more user terminals other than the first user terminal;

storing by a first storage of product information for each information-providing terminal; and

extracting and analyzing the product information that includes a price of the product, computing an analysis result indicating relationship between the product and the price of the product, and sending the result to the first user terminal and/or the information-providing terminals that the first user terminal has designated.

21. (previously presented) An online sales promotion device, comprising:
 - a first acceptance unit to receive, via a network, designation information designating one or more third party information-providing terminals which the first user permits to access a cart identifier associated with the first user, to access product information which the first user associates with the cart identifier, and to provide additional product information related to the accessed product information, from a first user terminal, said third party information-providing terminals not having permission to view the cart identifier and product information before receipt of the designation information;
 - a first storage unit to store, in association with the cart identifier, the product information and the designation information;
 - a first notification unit to send to the designated third party information-providing terminals the cart identifier and the product information associated therewith in accordance with a receipt of designation information of the one or more third party information-providing terminals or receipt of the product information;
 - a second acceptance unit to send additional information regarding the product information, and the cart identifier, from any one of the designated third party information-providing terminals;
 - a determining unit to determine whether the received additional information is from the third party information-providing terminal which the first user permits to access the cart identifier and to access the product information associated with the cart identifier;
 - a second storage unit to store the received additional information in association with the cart identifier according to the determination result; and
 - a second notification unit to send to the first user terminal the product information and the additional information.

22. (previously presented) A computer-readable recording medium storing a program to perform online sales promotion, by:

receiving via a network, designation information designating one or more third party information-providing terminals which the first user permits to access a cart identifier associated with the first user and to access product information which the first user associates with the cart identifier, and to provide additional product information related to the accessed product information, from a first user terminal, said third party information-providing terminals not having permission to view the cart identifier and product information before receipt of the designation information;

storing, by a first storage, in association with the cart identifier, the product information and the designation information;

sending the cart identifier and product information associated therewith to the designated third party information-providing terminals in accordance with a receipt of designation information of the one or more third party information-providing terminals or receipt of the product information;

receiving from any one of the designated third party information-providing terminals additional information regarding the product information, and the cart identifier;

determining whether the received additional information is from the third party information-providing terminal which the first user terminal permits to access the cart identifier and to access the product information associated with the cart identifier;

storing in a second storage the received additional information in association with the cart identifier according to the determination result; and

sending to the first user terminal the product information and the additional information.

23. (previously presented) An online sales promotion method, comprising:

associating product information and designation information, designating a third party that the first user permits to access the product information and supply additional product information, with cart identification information of a first user, said third party not having permission to view the cart identification and product information before receipt of the designation information from the first user;

providing the cart identification information and the product information to the third party;

receiving the additional information and the cart identification information from the third party;

determining whether the received additional information is from the third party which the first user permits to access the product information and supply the additional product information;

associating the additional information with the cart identification information according to the determination results; and

providing the associated information to the first user.

24. (previously presented) The online sales promotion method according to claim 23, further comprising:

associating settlement information needed for a purchase of the product with the cart identification information; and

selling the product to the first user, using the settlement information.

25. (previously presented) An online sales promotion method according to claim 23, further comprising:

receiving an instruction from the first user to assign information to a second user; and associating the second user with the cart identification information.

26. (previously presented) An online sales promotion method in accordance with claim 23, further comprising awarding an incentive upon determination that an incentive condition is fulfilled.

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IX. EVIDENCE APPENDIX

None

X. RELATED PROCEEDING APPENDIX

None